

REMARKS

The Official Action of September 16, 2003, and the prior art relied upon therein have been carefully reviewed. The claims remaining in the present application are only "allowable" claims 1-19 and new dependent claim 33, and therefore the present application should now be in condition for formal allowance. Accordingly, favorable consideration and early formal allowance are respectfully urged.

Acknowledgement by the PTO of the receipt of applicants' papers filed under Section 119 is noted.

Claims 1-32 have been rejected under the second paragraph of §112. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

First, the applicants respectfully note that the criticized terminology "consisting of or comprising" in claims 1 and 16 is not present as alternative transitional language, contrary to what is stated in the Official Action. The transitional language is the word "comprising" which appears in line 2 of original claim 1 after the words "which method". Nevertheless, as the examiner's comments are helpful and adoption of the examiner's suggestion does not narrow the claims or does not impose any limitations on the claims, the examiner's helpful suggestion has been adopted.

For the record, applicants believe that the claims as previously drafted, considered in light of applicants' specification (consistent with the law), would not have been confusing to those skilled in the art, and therefore the claims in their original form are fully in accordance with §112. At **worst**, the preamble language of claims 1 and 16 in their previous form might be considered objectionable, but **only** as to form.

Nevertheless, and as indicated above, and in deference to the examiner's views and to avoid or minimize needless argument, the examiner's helpful suggestion has been adopted. As indicated above, such amendments are of a formal nature only, i.e. made to place the claims in better form consistent with the examiner's understanding of what is desirable under U.S. practice. The amendments are not "narrowing" amendments because the scope of the claims has not been reduced. No limitations have been added and none are intended.

As regards claim 32, it has now been deleted without prejudice to applicants' rights to pursue such a claim in a continuing application, if applicants choose to do so.

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection based on §112.

Claims 20-32 have been rejected as obvious under §103 from the combination of two citations. This rejection is respectfully traversed, for the record, on the basis that the two citations are not relevant to the present invention, and consideration of the two together would not have led to the present invention.

Nevertheless, applicants need not address this rejection at the present time, as claims 20-32 have now been deleted in the present application, without prejudice to applicants' rights (including those rights provided by §§120 and 119) to pursue such claims in a continuing application without any penalty whatsoever, if applicants choose to do so.

Claims 1-19 have not been rejected on the basis of any prior art and have been indicated as being directed to "allowable" subject matter. Applicants accordingly understand that these claims are deemed by the PTO to define novel and unobvious subject matter under §§102 and 103. As these are the only claims remaining in the application, except for newly added dependent claim 33, patentable because it incorporates the subject matter of allowable claim 1, applicants believe that that the present application should be in condition for formal allowance.

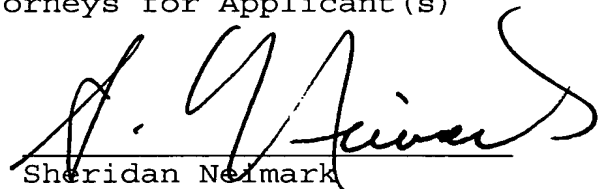
The prior art documents of record and not relied upon have been noted, along with the implication that such documents are deemed by the PTO to be insufficiently pertinent to warrant their application against any of applicants' claims.

Applicants believe that all issues have been addressed above, and resolved for the present application. Accordingly, applicants respectfully requests favorable consideration and early formal allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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